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Title Analysis

“Barbie Doll” is a poem about a young female who commits suicide. “Barbie” refers to a child’s toy created by the company Mattel. “Doll” refers an object or toy that normally tends to resemble an infant but sometimes humans of other ages. However, in the poem “Barbie Doll,” the connotation of “Barbie” is a materialistic girl who looks perfect in every way, and the connotation of “doll” is someone who acts like a puppet or someone who is easily persuaded by society to fit in with the crowd.

The first stanza of “Barbie Doll” discusses how the young girl was raised and the major influences in her childhood. She is noted as playing with dolls, “stoves,” “irons,” and “lipstick” (3-4). The average person cooks food with or on a stove, clothes are unwrinkled with irons, and girls can apply lipstick, a type of cosmetic. The poem’s true connotation shows the girl is probably being raised to be a housewife. She is learning to cook, clean, and be beautiful at an early age. She is eventually told by classmates that she has a “big” nose and “fat” legs (6). While the denotations of the words are hurtful as they mean too large or obese, the connotation represents the girl is unintentionally going against the idea of beauty and society values.

The second stanza explains that the girl is “intelligent” and “strong” (7-8). These details show the girl is dedicated and determined. Unfortunately for the time setting, these values were not important to a young woman in society. The connotations could almost mean odd and unusual. Again, the girl is also called “fat” and this time around “thick” (10). Thick is another synonym for fat, obese, heavy, etc. The connotation of thick is to go against beauty or society, whether the act is intended or not. The word also represents someone who is hard to get through too or has a dense mind.

The third stanza tells of how the girl was told to be “coy” and go on a “diet,” while not forgetting to “smile” (11-13). Dieting and smiling are usually associated with things that will make people happy, feel good, and release willpower. For the girl, dieting and smiling are other traits associated with Barbie. Barbie is known for being notoriously skinny, which the girl is being forced into. Smiling is therefore a way to hide her sadness. In the text, the denotation of coy is to be shy. The connotation is to avoid people. Also, the girl is described as wearing out much like a “fan belt” does (15). A fan belt is a fan in an engine that eventually dies or cools. For the girl, being a “fan belt” means giving in to pressure (15).

The fourth stanza shows the girl in her casket after committing suicide. Finally, she is considered as being “pretty” (21). The denotation of pretty is beautiful, stunning, cute, etc. In the girl’s case, it took cutting off her nose and committing suicide to be considered such. The connotation of pretty is society’s standards. The girl is also rewarded a “happy ending” (25). A story or life with a happy ending reminds one of a fairy tale. Again, this happy ending truly means the girl was able to conform to society’s standards of beauty by changing her entire appearance, therefore ending her life.

As a conclusion, the connotation of “Barbie Doll” comes off as extremely twisted. This idea is completely opposite of the intended denotation of an iconic image. The poem shows that girls are told they should strive to be the best they can be. In this case, being like Barbie is the best one can be, and unfortunately, Barbie is a stereotypical and anorexic blonde.

Work Cited

Arp, Thomas R., and Greg Johnson. *Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense*. Ninth ed. Massachusetts: Thomas Higher Education, 2006. 761-62. Print.

